

Central MRS Meeting Notes  
April 27, 2007  
Iredell Co DSS

Counties Present: Davidson, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Rockingham, Rowan.

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Data Collection

CSFR

Foster Homes – revisited

Training – Making it Stick

Barriers and Victories

WF/CPS Collaboration

Data Collection - Update on MRS database/DataWarehouse from Heather

- The changes to the web system are starting to be implemented.
  - As of Monday some fields have been removed. These are:
    - 210-12 Assignment of Accepted Reports (we can figure this out based on the finding.)
    - 210-20 If Petition filed with Juvenile Court, the date of that petition.
    - 210-22 Previous CPS contact with agency
    - 210 and 215 – 25 Criminal Disposition
  - The risk re-assessment risk levels are now also correct. Previously they were incorrect so that if you were entering them correctly you might have gotten an error message and could not save the information.
- In the next month DIRM will be making more changes to the MRS database. This may result in the MRS database being unavailable for a period of time. If you have workers trying to access it to key and it is unavailable, wait a couple of hours and try back before calling Heather or the Help Desk.
- Since they are uploading the changes a couple of pieces at a time the best way for me to keep you informed will be the MRS email.
- Once all the changes are made the 5106 will be updated one time and a DCD letter will come out.
- Currently constructing queries for the DataWarehouse. Reviewed the ones we are working on and solicited ideas for others.
- Thinking about training in late May or June.

CFSR

- We were the 2<sup>nd</sup> state to go though the CFSR – we failed which they had told us up front that we would (they said everyone would fail.)
- The feds felt that MRS was a significant strength.
- The lead reviewer was so impressed with MRS she has asked us to send in a paper talking about MRS for publication on the Children's Bureau website as best practice.
- Community folks reported that MRS had completely changed the Child Welfare System.

- Have already started working on implementing changes in areas where we could use some improvement. Nothing really dramatic that will come as a complete surprise.
- One area needing some improvement was non-custodial (absent) parents. Not just locating them (although we should work harder at that) but increased contact and attempts at engagement. Want them included in case plans.
- Preliminary data indicates that Mecklenburg county is one of the best metropolitan areas in the country.
- The feds specifically looked at involvement with courts, older youth in foster care, and tribes.

### Foster Homes – revisited

In February we talked about assessments on children in Foster Homes. All reports on children in Foster Care must be taken as investigative assessments. We discussed the pros and cons of offering the option to take these as family assessments if they met criteria. (For a review of these discussions see notes from the three February meetings.)

- Most people here were at the meeting in February.
- Discussion of the Adam Walsh law revealed that very soon any substantiation will result in a pulling of the license. Question was brought up would In Need of Services result in that as well?
  - Didn't know. Licensing workers thought that it would be essential for the licensing worker for the family be very involved in any assessment – investigative or family.
- Had a philosophical problem with pulling children out of a home where In Need of Services, but offer those same services to the foster home where you placed them?
  - But, are foster families not like all families, that sometimes there are temporary situations that overwhelm the families, and something might happen?
  - Yes, this is true, but foster parents are under a microscope from the community as well as DSS responsibility to the biological parents to let them know that you took their child and placed them someplace where the foster parents were found to do the same things.
  - But, we could remove the foster children, but still work with the foster parents and their own children (if they had any) because they might be good candidates to continue fostering after resolving the issue that led to the assessment.
- If there is an investigation there is a record in the CR no matter if subbed or not. If there is no record of caretakers in the CR, and foster parents apply with another provider in another county, how would the record of their assessment follow them.
  - The staff in Black Mountain know this and they will ensure that the last agency talk to the new one.
- Don't always assume that we will find In Need of Services and go from that point. A small percentage of our regular cases end up with an In Need of Services finding, and probably that percentage will be smaller with foster care because of the vulnerable position of foster parents.
- Can't quite precisely define this, but right now we treat In Need of Services the same as a Substantiation as far as mandatory services, what kind of a

can of worms are we opening letting the birth family know that we are providing case management services for the family that we placed their children into.

- Wouldn't we be providing services to the birth and foster family at the same time? What would that look like?
- Feel that there are liability issues and also issues with the way this would look in some county court systems.
- Part of the issue here is how to you provide services and support the foster parents all along? If you are supporting them and being a true partner for them all along, how you do the assessment is not going to have as big an impact. Have to go back and look at what causes the assessments in the first place.
- Went around the room and asked if the decision was up to you and the decision was made right now, would you want the option – more people wanted the option at intake, however there was a significant number that felt it needed to stay the same.
- One suggestion was made that as a state we are still too new at MRS – there are many counties that don't have a true overall handle on family assessments – feels strongly that we need to get good at what we are already trying to do before we try to affect the foster care system.

#### Training – Making it Stick

How do we follow up with training? Send people to training and months later they aren't 'doing' family centered – how do you sustain and reinforce the training? You can't just go to a training and then never talk about it again. Any ideas about this?

- Davidson stopped sending people to preservice as soon as soon as they got there – waited 2 months. So the supervisors did their own internal training for folks before they go to preservice. The new people shadow for that time.
  - Can't assume that people are ready to take cases on their own when they get back from preservice. Have to support them.
  - Other counties have had the new people do the documentation or the paperwork before going to preservice. That way they are familiar with stuff when they go to preservice.
- Counties said that often the trainings are not close enough that they can go. They cannot spend the night and the training is only offered close 1 or 2 times a year.
  - Understandable, but the trainers have to guess and try to be as fair as possible with scheduling. They also end up having to cancel many trainings because there are not enough attendees. Suggestion that even when a training is full send in registration so that Theresa will know how many people wanted it.
- Some counties pair up workers to mentor new workers.
- Feel that many workers now don't want to mentor people – more a 'what is in it for me' attitude.
- Mecklenburg has a lead worker position in each service area. These people have (normally) a slightly smaller caseload and they are expected to mentor more.
- Some people ask those that went to training to present to others at the agency. Feel that their workers find this useful because it is from the point of view of another worker.

- There is now a transfer of learning of training for supervisors. The whole idea of it is to learn how to support the trainings that people go to.

### Barriers & Victories

We are almost a year and a half into statewide implementation - what has gone well – or what might have surprised you in the way that it worked out?

- Rowan feels that Shared Parenting is a huge success. They were doing it before, but since MRS it is even better.
  - Have had 6 children that were relinquished directly from the birth parents to the foster parents.

What are barriers still?

- Think that MRS has not really gotten through to Foster Care/Permanency Planning yet.
- The Community meetings that they did upon rollout were effective at first, but the knowledge is fading. Community organizations are reverting to the way they used to be.
  - Ex: Schools not willing to be collaterals. A teacher is driving a kid to and from school every day, the mom wanted her to be a collateral but the teacher does not want to participate.
  - Just like training for us at DSS the community can't just hear it once. We have had a lot more time and a lot more MRS supports and resources than anyone in the community. We have to keep telling them and supporting them.
  - Davidson county has repeat meetings with dessert and coffee. They had their facilitator talk. Has also gone to the principal's offices and talked to them individually.

### WF/CPS Collaboration

What has been going well? Either something new or something that a county has been doing for some time?

- The DV money that WF has can help – the WF workers in Iredell have led the way with helping them to collaborate when they have been able to use this.
  - Woman who needed to get away from a man and CPS was involved. She had no resources and if she had stayed CPS might have had to remove the children. The DV money allowed her to move to a hotel for a week and the children remained with her.
- Rockingham has WF workers that are facilitating CFT. They can also contribute services that they are able to provide for a family. Has opened up CPS workers eyes – they now go check with WF even though they are not a mandatory collateral. They realize that they can get additional information on families from the WF worker because the WF worker knows things that the family is less willing to share with CPS.
  - Have had a case when CPS was told that a particular person was not living there – just happened to be there when CPS was there, but WF said that he was always there when they went and even answered the door and this helped in court.
- Families see WF as less punitive and CPS as very punitive. By collaborating and using WF resources often the CPS assessors/case managers are able to put services in place more quickly and get out of the case.

- Forsyth has CPS workers that are serving on Success teams with WF families and CPS can provide possible resources for those families even though they have no CPS case.

What would you like to see?

- Some counties WF are not allowed to leave the office. The employment services workers can make home visits, but the eligibility people cannot.
- You can still collaborate when there is not a case in common. WF can help CPS with services that do not involve a check (because of 200% of poverty funds, DV funds, etc.) WF may also know about some community based programs that we did not know about.
- Last March the theme of MRS meetings was collaboration between CPS and WF. All across the state there were roomfuls of WF workers and no CPS workers.
  - Trying to figure out why CPS doesn't seem to think they need to know about the WF side.
  - WF seems to be more invested in learning about CPS than the other way around.
- Most of the time we don't understand each others roles. And may not really want to – or feel that they can spare the time to learn it.
- How do you get to know each other? Problems when people are in different building and even when you are in the same building. You need to take it to somewhat of a social level so that people get to know each other and can then make a connection so that they can know who to talk to later on.
- Nicole mentioned that when she did the focus groups people gave positive comments to the Lunch and Learn idea. Especially with turnover and new employees. Some of the older employees might know someone in WF, but the newer people, especially new to the field of social work, don't have any idea about the services that WF could provide.
- There are a ton of things that TANF can pay for. It has to be approved by the Director, but depending on how your Director has decided how to spend the money, if the family is 200% of poverty they can access these funds.
  - This can be helpful to Services Recommended
- Remember to think about what CPS can offer WF, not just what you can get from them – ex: we are more used to doing home visits, maybe we can share some skills in that area.
- Rockingham had the WF supervisor come to a staff meeting periodically. Then every couple of months CPS and WF have joint staff meetings.
- Holly strongly believes that you have to sell your Director on allowing time to be social with the two sides. If they don't know each other personally, they won't access them.
- Will be a Work First Institute the first week of June.

### Other Issues

#### MRS Institute

- Holly sent out call for Presentations – even if you do not want to do one but you know a community partner who would be a good presenter, forward it to them.
- Will be held in Asheville in August 27-29.

Request that we discuss blended caseloads again. Know it came up in the CFSR and they are still unclear about the best way to implement this and be sure that the in-home services piece doesn't get neglected.

Future Meetings:

May

Central - May 23<sup>rd</sup> – Forsyth Co.

Southside Library

West – May 24<sup>th</sup> – Black Mountain Library

June

Central – June 20<sup>th</sup> Randolph Co

July